

Virginia Prisoner and Juvenile Offender Reentry Council
August 31, 2010
COUNCIL CONSIDERED RECOMMENDATIONS

***Almost all of the recommendations from the committees and workgroup require some funding. We are mindful that these recommendations, to the extent funding are required from the state, will be prioritized until source of funding (including federal grants) mechanism can be identified.**

Employment/Education/Workforce Issue Work Group

- Identify a third party entity and funding resources to conduct a study to determine the level, types, barriers and gaps, funding resources for education and training services and resources that are available in local jails and juveniles detention centers. Funding may be an issue at the local level.
- Recommend that DOC, DCE and DJJ conduct a joint study to determine the various funding sources and levels of funding directed towards education and training for adult and juvenile offenders in state facilities. The study should also identify available federal sources that may not be properly utilized by state agencies as it relates to incarcerated persons.
- DOC, DCE and local jails should explore the use of incentives to encourage educational achievement of at least a GED or high school diploma; and explore the feasibility of providing incentives for inmates with higher degrees who tutor other inmates.
- DOC, DCE, DJJ should develop more Career and Technical Education (CTE) and post secondary education opportunities for adult and juvenile offenders in state facilities.
- Improve efficiencies at DCE and increase capacity and opportunities for participation, including offering programs during the evening.
- In collaboration with the Office of the Attorney General, review the current requirement under Virginia law for purposes of determining in-state tuition eligibility for juveniles held in state and local facilities. Legislative change may be required to clarify the “domicile” language.
- Ask if VEC and other relevant state agencies to consider developing and implement a marketing and media campaign to increase employer and public awareness of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, any relevant state tax credits, the EEOC guidance on hiring persons with criminal records, 211 registration and use, Career Readiness Certificates, fidelity bonding, and other benefits that may extend to them for hiring people with criminal histories, and an understanding of the issues and barriers faced by offenders returning to the community. Fiscal impact.
- Local communities should identify private partners and community organizations that would be willing to assist them by providing documentaries depicting what ex-offenders

face upon return to their communities (e.g. *Omar and Pete* and others available through the Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign).

- Encourage DOC, DJJ and local jails to develop individual portfolios for offenders being released/seeking employment similar to those which include information on bonding, tax credits/qualifications, skills/education of the person, services and agencies supporting the person (such as supervision monitoring, drug testing, etc.) and a contact for problems during employment.
- DOC, DJJ and local jails should form a partnership with private entities and faith based organizations to provide mentoring and other supportive services for those who do not have a probation/parole supervision requirements following release from custody.
- Recommend that the Secretary of Commerce and Trade review fidelity bonding and the feasibility of establishing a state program which would include coordinating the process, marketing the bonds and process to eligible agencies and organizations, purchasing the bonds and making them available to eligible persons, and training job developers and similar positions on the process and benefits. Virginia does not have a centralized State Bonding Coordinator, thus Federal Bonding does not exist as a hiring incentive for employers in most Virginia localities.

Housing Issue Work Group

- Ask the Housing and Community Development to conduct a formal study to assess the effect of residency restrictions on recidivism and impact on public safety for sex offenders.

Health and Family Reintegration Work Group

- Seek legal analysis from the Attorney General's Office on Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and its applicability to offenders.
- Consider using 1% of the telephone fees for offender preparation programs within the DOC. Fiscal impact of this will be further considered.

Women Focus Committee

- The Secretary of Public Safety and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources review, evaluate, and strengthen the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Community Service Boards (CSB) and the Virginia Department of Corrections as it relates to mental health services for released female offenders and by extension to all male offenders.
- DOC should evaluate and review the Offender Re-Entry Programs currently operating in 14 localities and ensure that similar programs and work release programs are available for female offenders. All existing re-entry programs must be evaluated to determine application of evidence-based practices.

- Establish more Community Residential Programs (CCR) (formerly called “Halfway Houses”) and TC Programs to be made available to women offenders released from DOC. Of particular interest would be a halfway house model that allows women to have their children and/or provide daycare services. Currently there are only three CCR’s operating in the state for female offenders transitioning out of jail/prison with a capacity of less than 50 total for all three. Operation of these programs requires funding. This recommendation will be considered in 2012/2013.
- DCE should explore adding more vocational training programs for women and other programs relevant in the community as identified by (DCE) and DOC.
- DOC and, to the extent possible local and regional jails, should provide Reentry/Family re-education classes for families prior to release from prison and jail. This would assist families/offender prepare for seamless transition. Community Corrections should provide “families in transition” session/seminars for those under supervision.
- Pilot Program in Cooperation with the Norfolk Reentry Council.
- Enhance existing Crisis Intervention Team Training provided by Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) to include 8-hour Advanced Training on Veterans Issues. DBHDS, through existing community providers, currently trains law enforcement officers to work with persons with serious mental illness in Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT). Law enforcement officers receive CIT certification from Department of Criminal Justice Services. An 8-hour curriculum for Advanced CIT Officer training has been developed and presented successfully in one jurisdiction. The Task Force recommends a budget amendment of \$25,000 to DBHDS to provide advanced training to CIT officers statewide.
- Facilitate communication with the Virginia Congressional Delegation regarding importance and need for expansion of Veterans Healthcare Administration “Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV) Services and Resources” and “Veteran Justice Outreach Initiative.”

Juvenile Focus Area Committee

- DJJ should develop “transition pods” within the juvenile correctional centers with a focus on independent living and transfer identified juveniles to these pods 3-6 months prior to release to begin practicing life skills taking into consideration staff and institutional security.
- Seek legal analysis to clarify roles of DJJ, DSS and the parent or guardian of offenders under the age of 18 under Virginia law.
- Implement a policy or legislative changes that would allow juveniles to obtain a restricted driver’s license only for use to/from employment or education, mental health or substance abuse treatment or to attend places of worship.

- A study be conducted by the Virginia State Crime Commission on the impact of background records checks containing confidential information about juvenile adjudication and employability.
- Request that the Commission on Youth research model programs that focus on independent living skills (such as apartment living) for older juvenile offenders released from commitment.
- Request that Commission on Youth study the issue of public housing options and adjudicated juveniles. The sub-committee recommended that a legislative proposal be introduced that would prohibit residence restriction for “juvenile adjudications.”